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**The Unnoficial Decision of the Bloodiest War**

By 1961, the American Civil War was inevitable. The Confederate States had succeeded from the Union and considered themselves their own country. The Union states however, couldn’t just let the southern states up and leave the Union for their own, harmful good. Luckily, the Union still had a fort controlled in the south; Fort Sumter. Now, let’s look through the eyes of Abraham Lincoln in his decision to hold the fort. And Jefferson Davis’ decision to take it.

So how did this all happen? How could such a strong nation be divided into two different “countries” in a matter of a few months? First, we must look back at the events prior to Fort Sumter and the Southern States Succeeding. The spark of the despute over slavery leads back to the Wilmot Proviso, a document set to make the new land won from Mexico, free (wasn’t passed by senate). Next, was the Compromise of 1850, this contained several points; including California. California was made a free state, but citizens could decide if they wanted slavery. The Capitol of the United States was also a point in the compromise of 1850, as it had a huge slave trade. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was just a book, written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, also sparked a lot of controversy over slavery. The Ostend Manifesto, Kansas-Nebraska Act, The Sumner/Brooks incident, and the Dred Scott decision all also helped to tear the once great nation apart. In just a matter of years the United States faced itself. A final decision must be made.

When Abe Lincoln was elected president in 1860, southerners new they had to do something now, before it was to late. They believed he was an abolitionist, and would make a law stating slavery illegal. They didn’t want to be controlled like that. The southerners almost had a point. They were kind of like the colonies getting away from Britain so long ago. But this time the Union wanted control for a good reason, they knew slavery wasn’t right. South Carolina was the first to act, the state suceeded from the Union and declared itself free of Lincoln’s control. Within months, the whole Confederate country was born. The Union however, still had control of Fort Sumter in the new country.

The Confederacy asked Lincoln to surrender his troops from Fort Sumter, but Lincoln made a bold decision and decided to stay there. Not only did he stay there, he attempted to resupply the Fort. Almost as if he was trying to provoke the Confederacy?

Lincoln had every right to keep the Fort though. Not just for his personal reasons but legally, the fort was federal property. “No State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union….The power confided in me will be used to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts”(Document A). So Lincoln was really just doing what he was suppose to do, control what is his. Backing down to the southerners would be like giving in, it would be supporting their intentions of being their own country.

Lincoln new a war was on the rise, if he just sat there and let the Confederates go, they would just move on and live in their own country. Lincoln wanted to preserve the Union. He had to do something. He couldn’t however, just go out and declare war. It would look bad without any good reasoning. “The firing on that fort will inaugurate a civil war greater than any the world has yet seen, and I do not feel competent to advise you. Mr. President, at this time it is suicide, murder, and you will lose us every friend at the North. You will wantonly strike a hornets’ nest which extends from mountains to ocean. Legions now quiet will swarm out and sting us to death. It is unnecessary. It puts us in the wrong. It is fatal”(Document F). This comes from the Confederate Secretary of State, Robert Toombs. All Lincoln needed to do to start a war was keep his federal property. This would be a war to preserve the Union. Lincoln was after all just defending what his forefathers had created. “Four scores and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”. All men are created equal, that’s the way he wanted the south to see it.

Many northerners would say Jefferson Davis’ decision to take Fort Sumter was a bad one. But we must remember, the Confederates were not evil like they often are portrayed. We are brought up today taught that the Confederates were that bad guys, because slavery today is extremely looked down upon and unreal in our region. This event happened when we were still learning; southerners simply had a different point of view. Jefferson Davis and his fellow countrymen simply felt like the colonists did in the 1700’s. They felt like they were controlled by the north much like the colonists were controlled by Britain. They couldn’t quite understand how bad slavery was. Much like the founding fathers of the United States, the South succeeded from the Union. Now for the topic of Fort Sumter, Jefferson Davis truly believed in his new country as did everyone else living in it. They were done putting up with the Union and simply didn’t want them in their newfound territory. “If you have no doubt as to the authorized character of the agent who communicated to you the intention of the Washington government to supply Fort Sumter by force, you will at once demand its evacuation, and, if this is refused, proceed in such manner as you may determine to reduce it”(Document H). This was an order from Davis himself, basically telling the Union to give it up, to go home. The Union didn’t surrender the fort, Davis wanted them to know the Confederacy was serious. They stepped up and took Fort Sumter.

Neither side was necessarily wrong in their decisions over Fort Sumter. Such a little fort, in a rather non strategic position, sparked the greatest civil war in history. The fort was virtually pointless, but the actions made by the Union and the Confederacy were huge. They both stepped up to the plate; the northerners wanting to preserve the entire Union, and the Southerners trying to show they were serious, and didn’t want to be controlled. Everything happened so fast in the 1800’s. Although there were so many tragedies in the war, it actually brought the nation together. Such simple things can make such a dramatic difference, simply two men, doing what they’re paid to do.